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Improving Academic Learning and Success Through Transparency: A Student's Perspective

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Improving Academic Learning and Success Through Transparency: A Student's Perspective

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Mission: Comprehensive teaching university of

 Mission: Comprehensive teaching university of Southeastern Massachusetts using its resources to support and advance the economic and cultural life of the region and the state

BSU Institutional Profile

- Enrollment: 9,500 undergraduate/1,400 graduate students
- · Degrees: 97 academic degrees offered

Purpose of the Transparency Project

- The BSU Transparency Project is led by the Graduate Assistant in the Office of Assessment
- Aims to make all program learning outcomes easily visible and understandable to current and prospective faculty, staff, and students
- · Vital for students' understanding of their academic learning and success
- National calls for transparency by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment and the Association of American Colleges and Universities
- Required evidence of transparency of student learning outcomes by NECHE

Project Research Methods

- Conducted two sets of semi-structured interviews with college deans (n=8) in spring and fall of 2019
- · Comparative analysis of interview transcripts
- Validated emerging themes with assessment colleagues
- Review of the literature on transparency of learning outcomes
- Field notes, including lived experiences as a BSU graduate and undergraduate student

BSU's Transparency Framework Saturation Levels **Campus Community** Academic Student Support Offices College of Academic Department Academic Department **Level 5: Complete Transparency** Level 4: Connected and Applied for Student Understanding **Level 3: Integration in Academic and Student Affairs** Level 2: Active Communication of Program Learning Outcomes with Students Level 1: Visibility and Understandability (Continuum) Outcomes only in Outcomes accessible to the public and may Outcomes internally posted department documents or may not be easily understandable within the university High Low Visibility Visibility (Actively communicated) (Zero transparency) Outcomes shared only at Outcomes internally posted within Outcomes accessible to the the college level public and are clear and the university and are

Identified Barriers to Transparency of Learning Outcomes at BSU

easily understandable

Academic Freedom

Prevents assigned incorporation of transparency into course material and structure; need faculty buy-in

Limited Institutional Procedures

(Deans, Assessment Office, Faculty, Staff, et. al.)

Lack of campus-wide guidelines on visibility at BSU pertaining to program learning outcomes

Perceived Lack of Value for Students

Perceptions by faculty, deans, and staff that learning outcomes have little or no value for students

Uncertainty about who has Influence

easily understandable

Misunderstandings about who has influence in making learning outcomes visible

Assessment Jargon

Assessment vocabulary and practices may be confusing, feel disconnected from teaching, or simply unfamiliar